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## SERMON DLIV.

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### LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN.

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."—Rom. 12: 18.

THIS chapter may with propriety be termed the Christian's manual. It contains, in few words, a beautiful system of Christian morals. No production of man on the subject of morals could be perfect, that did not contain the great principles embodied in this chapter.

Some have called the precepts found in the text and context the romance of Christianity; as though it were extravagant to suppose that in this selfish world, agitated continually with the conflicts of life, exposed to strifes and contentions, any could live in peace. But this blessed gospel is not romance. We are told the light of heaven shines, and the darkness of earth comprehendeth it not. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* One born blind cannot conceive of the beauties of the rainbow; so one under the dominion of supreme selfishness cannot well comprehend the exercise and blessedness of benevolence.

The didactic parts of the Bible are given in plain, intelligible language. They are adapted to all grades of character, all conditions of life. They are sublime and beautiful for their simplicity, solemn and weighty for their authority. *They are given to be obeyed.*

We shall, first, endeavor to give the true import of this passage. Secondly, attempt to show how this precept can be obeyed. Thirdly, urge some motives to induce obedience.

I. We shall endeavor to *give the true import of this passage.*

This precept is not a solitary one ; it is found in substance both in the Old and the New Testaments. In the 34th Psalm: *Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good ; seek peace, and pursue it.* Heb. 12: 14: *Follow peace with all men.*

The language of the text is guarded: *If it be possible.* Here is no ground for the charge of extravagance. We are not responsible for the wickedness or cruelty of others. There may be instances in which the good of society, the cause of morals, the safety of the public, may require that an example be made of the incorrigible, the obstinately wicked.

Some men, as the Scriptures affirm, are like a troubled sea, which cannot rest. They seem to have an evil spirit, like the men of Shechem, (Judges 9: 23;) a spirit of treachery and selfishness, which will disturb any community; Ishmaelites—their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them. Peace may be disturbed, but *we* must not cause the disturbance, or do any thing to prolong it.

*As much as lieth in you.* We may have an unhappy temperament, an irascible temper, a restless disposition. This we must subdue. It is said that Socrates was naturally ill-tempered, easily provoked, and revengeful ; but by mere dint of resolution and discipline he mastered his evil propensity, and became habitually calm, peaceable, and gentle. If a heathen could subdue himself, what excuse can we have for remaining under the dominion of passion, who are surrounded by the influence of the gospel, who live under laws pervaded by the spirit of forbearance and equity, and are furnished with such examples of mildness and long-suffering as are found in the Bible ?

*As much as lieth in you.* We are to do all in our power to exhibit a good spirit to others, to do them good, to forbear with them, to return blessing for railing ; never to give them any provocation, to keep within the bounds of propriety and justice.

It must be a rare instance of brutality and malice to injure one who is habitually kind and forgiving, to abuse good-nature. Yet there are such persons. They will torture the sensitive and impose upon the retiring and helpless. But even in that case, it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. The object is peace ; great sacrifices are to be made to attain it. The precept is exceeding broad. We are to go to the extent of *possibility* ; not of expediency, not of policy, not of comfort, but of *possibility—if it be possible.* We are to make every effort ; each one is held responsible for his own exertions ; they are to be put forth to the utmost extent.

*As much as lieth in you.* If you have tried seventy times, you are not to give up the matter in despair, but as in the case of forgiveness, until seventy times seven—to the extent of our power.

We are to live peaceably with *all men.* Of some it is said,

if all the world were like them, there would be no contention; they are peaceably disposed, always doing good. Of others, that they are always in trouble; restless, domineering, exacting, cruel, envious, jealous, revengeful, hateful, and hating one another. Even with such we must live peaceably—receive, but never return an injury.

We can neither approve nor love what is unlovely. An evil disposition is hateful; and if called to give an expression in relation to it, we must call things by their right names. We can only approve of things that are excellent. If no good is to be done, we are to avoid all needless exposure of the faults of others. There must be no man who can say in truth, *If you had done all in your power, we should never have been at variance.*

It does not say, live peaceably with all *reasonable* men, all *fair* men, all *kind* men; but if there are unreasonable men, unkind and uncomfortable men, we are, if possible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with them. It requires no effort to live in peace with one who is benevolent and well-disposed.

The qualifying words in the text suppose there will be trials, provocations, and occasions of strife. If you do well when you have no temptation to do otherwise, what reward can you claim? but if, when you are injured or insulted, or cruelly treated, you take it patiently, this is praiseworthy, this is what the text requires. The men of the world act on the principle of retaliation—an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but the gospel proposes another rule: *Resist not evil; do good to them who injure you, and pray for them who despitefully use you.* So far our duty is plain.

Some may be ready to inquire, How shall we conduct towards those who are opposed to the truth, who hate the light? Shall we conceal the offensive parts of the Bible? Shall we be silent when the doctrines or duties of religion are assailed? We answer, No. We have special directions in this matter. We have also the example of Christ and his apostles. Jude says: *It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.* Says Christ: *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

There are many such passages of Scripture as these. They teach us that natural men will pervert the gospel and oppose it; that it is the duty of Christians, of ministers especially, to refute error and bear witness to the truth. Controversy cannot always be avoided, but we must be careful not to lose our temper, not to indulge ill-will, not to treat those who differ from us as enemies. The deeper the error, the more tender should be our compassion; for in proportion to their exposure to perish in their sins, should be our desire to save the souls of men. *Am I your enemy, inquires an apostle, because I tell you the truth?*

Those who are guilty of immorality, or are chargeable with heresy, must be admonished; an effort must be made to reclaim

them, lest they die in their sins, or fatally injure others. No duty is required of us which cannot be performed if attempted in a proper spirit. If we are to contend for the faith, it should be with right motives—it must not be for victory; and in a right way, not with carnal weapons. If we exhort or reprove, it must be with all long-suffering and doctrine. If the text were understood and obeyed, it would put an end to all war, to duels and personal animosity, to litigation and strife.

One or the other of contending parties must be in fault; it is usually true of both. If peace is sought, it may be obtained. If rulers violate the laws of God and declare war, the oppressed nation has a right to resist, and private individuals may be called into the field, in which case they are not responsible for the consequences.

It will be a great advance in the progress of civil society, when nations bind themselves to settle all difficulties by arbitration. If men will take time to consider, reason will gain the ascendancy. We are assured the period will come when *men shall learn war no more.*

## II. *How can this precept be obeyed?*

We answer, in general, by watching against besetting sins. *Watch and pray*, said Christ, *that ye enter not into temptation.* Every one has his easily besetting sins; and not among the least of them is a hasty temper, an overbearing disposition, a revengeful spirit. If a man is aware of his infirmity and will guard against it, he may hope to escape the evil of transgression. More particularly,

### 1. *By cultivating a peaceable spirit.*

As man is a social being, he is constituted for society. He acts and is acted upon. He is constantly exerting an influence, and is also affected by the temper and conduct of others. If we cherish kindly feelings, are disposed to put a fair construction upon the actions of men; if we are discreet, temperate, humane, and ready to communicate, we shall do much towards maintaining peace in the community. It is said, "Love begets love;" the same is true of peace. It will be no difficult matter to live in peace, if we ourselves are peaceable. *A wrathful man stirreth up strife, but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.*

To cherish a peaceable disposition, we must have a deep sense of our own unworthiness; we must not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We must mortify pride, overcome selfishness, and put a strong restraint upon every unholy feeling. Religion inculcates humility. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love: in honor preferring one another.* It enjoins fervent charity, a disposition to do good to all men. *Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves.* Says Paul: *I beseech you walk worthy of your vocation, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* One who

habitually dwells upon his own imperfections, upon the forbearance of God, the mutual dependence of the members of the same household and community, will see the necessity of forbearance and kindness. God does not treat us as we deserve: shall we be overbearing to our fellow-servants? So long as we cultivate a peaceable temper, we shall give no offense to any, we shall avoid all provocation.

2. *By aiming to promote a spirit of peace in others.*

There is too much of the disposition of Cain in the world: *Am I my brother's keeper?* By standing aloof from others, throwing all responsibility upon them, we induce a hardness and selfishness, which prompt to keen-sightedness to every fault, which put men on the defensive, ready to misconstrue every word, and suspect every motion. If we fail to inspire confidence, there is no bond of union. Many who appear unamiable have diseased bodies; they need a physician rather than a reprover; they claim our sympathy. Others, who appear unkind, and become involved in difficulty, are thus punished for the sins of their youth. They were never subdued, never taught to take an interest in others; they are strangers to the happiness and sunshine of benevolence; selfishness has had supreme control till they come to act only for their own good. Their own peace, the comfort of others, the peace of the community, are sacrificed to present feelings. They cannot bear to be crossed. Such unhappy individuals are their own worst enemies. How are we to live in peace with such? Certainly not by exhibiting a similar spirit; that would at once kindle the fire of enmity; but by putting on the meekness of Christ. A meek, forbearing spirit has done wonders. How did Jacob pacify his enraged brother? Not by showing a bold front, and marshalling a host to intimidate him; but by showing kindness, by doing him good, by an appeal to his better feelings, by showing a heart susceptible of warm affection, by assuming the air and using the language of humility. He attempted no justification. If *Esau* could be won by kindness, of *whom* shall we despair?

How did Paul soften the prejudices of his countrymen who were so hostile to him? By the power of argument, or the force of ridicule and biting sarcasm? No; but by submitting to obsolete rites or abstaining from allowed indulgences. He manifested an inexhaustible spirit of tenderness. His own affecting statement will best illustrate his course on this subject: *For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*



If it be necessary for us to oppose error, or testify against overt acts of sin, our *manner* must be mild; our sincerity must be so manifest, that we have a witness even in the conscience we disturb, that all may feel that we are ready to heal the wound which fidelity to Christ and truth compels us to inflict. Opposition to evil is consistent with love to those who commit it. Sin is odious, but the sinner is immortal, and a desire to save him should be the manifest feeling of our hearts.

We are not expected to accomplish impossibilities. *If it be possible*, says the apostle. There are some persons so bigoted in their religious views, that all must come to their standard or be denounced. How can we keep the unity of the Spirit with them? We must surrender our judgment and reason, and think as they do. They have no idea of condescension. The giving up must be all on one side. Many fruitless attempts have been made to promote universal Christian union; oceans have been traversed, conventions held, able arguments urged, eloquence and piety have exhausted their powers—in vain. Men are as wide apart as ever. Christians will not give up the right of private judgment; each denomination claims the privilege of interpreting for themselves the Scriptures, and choosing a platform for their union.

So it is in social life. Some are so dogmatical and important, that if an attempt is made to promote peace in sincerity, to bury all ill-will, to harmonize all in the church or in society, there is but one way: all must yield to one mind, submit to one dictation. This they are not willing to do. Confidence is a plant of slow growth; once lost, it is not easily regained. What, then, is to be done? Shall we despair of living in peace, because some are contentious? No man was ever more hated, or defamed, or ill-treated, than Jesus of Nazareth; and yet he went about doing good, he maintained a peaceable walk, he inculcated peace and exemplified its spirit. Who were his enemies? and of what did they accuse him? Was he not holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners? He avoided those who were incensed by his presence. It will be safe to follow his example. After we have done all we can to dissolve the rigor of prejudice, to do away false impressions, to present the truth in a fair light; after we have shown a meek, quiet spirit, and have labored to save the souls of men, we may leave the matter with God. Such was the conduct of Christ and his apostles. They went to the extent of possibility to live peaceably with all men.

I am aware that many regard this precept as impracticable; and while it may be allowed in a system of morals, and is even admired as an abstraction, it is deemed absurd as a rule of life. Every one has a reason for his opinion. Some are benefited temporarily by contention; some unfortunately have a quarrelsome disposition, and therefore say, "We must take men as they are, and not as they ought to be." The precept is so far above and beyond any thing they know or believe, they think him an enthu-

sist who would insist upon a compliance with it. Such, most unquestionably, are mistaken, and the mistake is an important one. If they die in it, they will lie down in eternal sorrow. A contentious spirit, after death, will go to its own place. What was said of the Bible is true of this distinctive feature of it: the chief objection against it is a *bad heart*. The precept lies, with all its solemn weight, upon every conscience. To every one, God says, *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

### III. *We urge some motives to induce obedience to this precept.*

Among many which might be adduced, we select the following, in the hope that a duty so important, involving so many interests, securing so many blessings, may be observed by all.

1. *Our own peace will be secured.* We cannot violate a law of our nature without suffering its penalty. We are so constituted, that contention renders us unhappy. We are made for peace. The universal disposition, since the apostasy, to strife, shows how entirely sin has transformed man—what a revolution in our nature has been effected by the fall. If selfishness has been termed the essence of sin, it is without doubt the cause of sorrow. A condition of peace is one of comparative happiness. What so desirable in this world as friends? and he that would have friends must show himself friendly. There is no person, however obscure or weak, however dependent or poor, whose good-will is not worth possessing. Even Doeg, who was overlooked by David as unworthy of a thought, a personification of meanness and jealousy, did him no small injury. A regard to our own comfort and safety should lead us to live peaceably with all men.

2. *A regard for the welfare of others* should induce us to cultivate a spirit of peace.

We are required to *do good to all men*. We cannot injure them more than to provoke them to anger. An injury disturbs the temper, and stirs up wrong feeling. The first promptings of unsanctified nature are to return the injury. This will only inflame the aggressor, and, in turn, an additional amount of enmity is felt; and thus deep-seated opposition is cherished, embittering future life, while the injury perhaps originated in inadvertence or thoughtlessness.

If we habitually cherish kind feelings, we shall never provoke others. Men put a favorable construction upon the conduct of those who have gained a character for benevolence. Words or actions which cause regret are usually provoked. How can we do others more injury than to throw them off their guard; to irritate them, either by insinuation or reproach? Even Moses, so distinguished for meekness, was led to speak unadvisedly, for which he suffered more than for all the other acts of his life. We do not know what a fire we may be kindling, which may consume our own peace, and that of many others, by breaking the bond of peace. Oh, let us avoid the very appearance of evil!

3. *A desire to be useful* should lead us to obey this precept. A

family, or neighborhood, or church, disturbed, precludes all hope of doing good. In proportion to the elevation of the station we occupy is the obligation to serve our day and generation. Life is short, our friends and acquaintances are passing away; we cannot, therefore, afford to spend any part of our brief stay in this world in contention. This consideration influenced the Apostle Paul. He says to the Corinthians: *Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.* Having exhorted them to *give no offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God,* he adds, *Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*

Days of contention will have an end; the evils of strife must be reviewed. How will it plant our dying pillow with thorns, to remember our ill-feelings, to think of the injury we have done to others, how much we have abridged their usefulness. It shed a light around the feet of Samuel, the prophet and judge of Israel, as he was about to enter the valley of death, to reflect how he had studied to promote the spiritual and temporal good of the people. He was a man of peace and justice; he had been a blessing in his day and generation. *Blessed are the peace-makers,* said Christ.

Usefulness is best promoted in the midst of tranquillity. *The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.* It is not sown amidst the noisy disputation and virulent invectives of angry and contending parties.

My brethren, if we would be more extensively useful, and, dying, would leave a reputation better than precious ointment, let us cultivate a peaceable spirit, and aim to promote a good understanding among all men.

4. *The intrinsic excellence and divine beauty of peace* should stimulate us to live peaceably with all men.

*Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.* This delightful Psalm, in the spirit of it, will be sung in heaven. As the dew that fell upon the sacred mountain, reviving the face of nature, and diffusing the freshness of health through the vegetable kingdom, so is the spirit of peace in this world of conflict. It spreads a charm over the face of society, fills the hearts of all men with joy, and assimilates earth to heaven.

5. *The genius of Christianity* leads to an observance of this precept.

The grand characteristic of the gospel is *peace*. The great object of worship is the God of peace. The Mediator is the Prince of peace. The Sanctifier is the Spirit of peace. The



object of Christ's mission was to restore peace between God and man. Reconciliation is the burden of our embassy. "Peace on earth and good-will to man" was the substance of the song sung by angels when they announced the coming of Christ. The tendency of the gospel is to promote peace. What then more befitting the disciple of Jesus than a life of peace? A contentious spirit is a denial of the Lord that bought us; it is contrary to the whole system of grace revealed in the gospel. The true representation of a follower of Christ would be a person with a light in one hand to dispel the darkness of sin, and an olive-branch in the other, showing that his object is peace.

6. *The example of Christ and his apostles* is another reason why we should seek peace and pursue it.

We are commanded to walk worthy of our vocation; to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. This feature of Christ's character we are particularly required to imitate. *For even hereunto were ye called*, says Peter, *because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.* While he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, he was at the same time meek and gentle; when reviled, he reviled not again; he prayed for his murderers. What could he have done more to promote peace on earth?

The apostles followed in his steps; and they urge us to imitate them in this respect. *Walk so as ye have us for an ensample.* How can we expect to be associated with them in the kingdom of heaven, if we have not their spirit?

FINALLY. Obedience to this precept is connected with a *hope of eternal blessedness.*

They who are contentious, and obey not the truth, are represented as in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity; while those who live peaceably with all men from a right motive, are included in the blessings of grace. *Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.* Heaven is a place of perfect peace, because it is a place of perfect purity. To inherit the promises, we must become meet for the inheritance here; we must cultivate the spirit of Christ, and be at peace with all men.

How desirable the condition of a family, a neighborhood, a church, a community, in perfect harmony,—each one happy in himself, and happy in all around him! Nothing but sin, in the form of selfishness, prevents such a state. We are told that there was war in heaven, but the evil spirit was at once and for ever banished. The millennium, which is described as resembling heaven, will be a period when knowledge will abound, and all the world will be at peace. Glorious period!

Brethren, what manner of spirit do we possess? Have we the meekness of Christ? Do we consider this precept as binding upon us? Do we strive to overcome our pride and self-will? Have any of us been so long under the influence of selfishness,

that we have lost the power of self-control, and are at the mercy of every provocation? We may think it a light matter to violate this law of Christ, but present and future punishment will teach us otherwise.

Peace is the best blessing of heaven; let us seek after it with all our hearts. *God hath called you to peace. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

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## SERMON DLV.

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### LEGAL AND GOSPEL SYSTEMS COMPARED.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of the flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."—ROMANS 8: 3, 4.

THE text may be thus paraphrased: For what the moral law could not do, that is, to free man from sin and condemnation,—because it was inefficacious, in consequence of the power of sin,—God did, by sending his Son, who took upon himself the likeness of sinful flesh, or the nature of man, and for sin, (literally, by a sacrifice for sin,) condemned sin in the flesh,—condemned it by his death, showed it to be abhorrent to God, condemned it, in that he subdued it, destroyed it. And this was done, that the righteousness required by the law might be made attainable by us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Three things are here declared: 1st. That the law cannot free us from the power or the guilt of sin; 2dly. That, to meet this exigency, God clothed his own Son with the form of humanity, and, through his sacrifice, the dominion of sin was destroyed; and 3dly. That in virtue of this sacrifice, believers, or those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, are restored to the favor of God.

Nominal Christians all agree that man is in a state of sin, and consequently at alienation from God.

They all agree, that, so long as he remains in this condition of alienation, he is in the way to ruin.

They all agree, that he can be restored to God's favor and to the path of true happiness, only through some change of life and character.

But, from this point, their opinions widely diverge. There are those who assert that the sinner is reconciled to God, simply and solely in virtue of his repentance and consequent good works. The law indeed requires implicit and unbroken obedience, upon pain of the severest penalties; but, in view of man's reformation, God in his sovereignty sets aside the demands of the law. And the purpose for which Christ came into the world was to declare this great fact, that God is ready to restore to his favor all who will repent and turn from their sins; and also to disclose a great system of motive, fitted to lead us to this repentance.

On the other hand, it is the faith of the Church that, while repentance is an indispensable condition of salvation, so far as those are concerned who are capable of repentance, it is not the procuring cause, the *ground* of our salvation. We believe that Christ came into the world to do that for us, without which God would not have accepted our repentance; and that, had Christ not died, let man have done what he might, the law must inevitably have had its course, and every sinner have been utterly and eternally condemned. And, if we can understand the force of language, this must be the doctrine of the text.

But it is not my present purpose to enter upon the exposition or direct proof of the evangelical system of faith: my design is rather to consider it in its *practical* and *personal* bearing. Now it is a very common remark: Inasmuch as all recognize the existence of sin and acknowledge its great evil; as all allow the necessity of our being delivered from sin in order to secure the favor of God; as all believe that the truly penitent actually receive forgiveness at his hands; why does it greatly matter what may be our individual opinion as to the ground of our acceptance with God, and as to the precise place which the Saviour holds in the sinner's justification? The *practical* duties to which we are pointed under both systems are the same; they both teach that only the pure in heart can see God. Is it then vitally important that I should receive, in its full length and breadth, what is called the scheme of grace, the doctrine of salvation through the merits of a crucified Redeemer? Let us consider this question with candor and seriousness; for a more momentous inquiry was never started.

You will all allow, that, in order to bring any system of motives to bear effectually upon the renewal and sanctification of the sinner, it is, in the first place, indispensable to produce in his mind the *conviction of sin*. Till this is effected, nothing is effected. We may discourse till the day of doom of the beauty of holiness, of the goodness of God, of the reasonableness of his service, and it will be like pouring water upon the rock, unless we can convince men that they are sinners, and that sin is "that abominable thing which God hateth." And the great cause of the utter inefficacy of mere moral teaching, is to be found in the

fact that men do not appreciate the depth of their own corruption.

Now, as it is one great object of the gospel to awaken us to a sense of our sinfulness, it may be fairly inferred that it will reveal a system of truth, peculiarly fitted to give us high notions of the majesty of the Divine law, and of God's hatred of sin; such a system as will be likely to draw forth from the transgressor the earnest cry, "Woe is me, for I am unclean!"

Is such a result to be looked for from the doctrine which teaches that, without an atonement, without the mediation of an Almighty Saviour, God may be propitiated, and all the terrific threatenings of justice be set aside?

Is it not altogether natural for the sinner to reason thus with himself?—"An evil so easily remedied cannot be in itself a very grievous evil. If a few tears of contrition, and such an imperfect obedience as usually follows this penitential sorrow, are all that God requires in order to the blotting out the long record of my iniquities—all that he demands, in order to my restoration to his favor—all that he asks, in order to my admission to heaven—surely he cannot look upon me as so deeply criminal. There must be something in my natural infirmity and in my outward condition, which greatly palliates the enormity of my sins. If peace may be had with God on such easy terms, the stability of his government cannot depend upon the holiness of the universe. If the claims of the law may be so readily annulled, that law cannot deserve very profound respect, and I need not be seriously terrified by its penalties." Whether this reasoning be sound or not, it is precisely such as the sinner would be inclined to adopt. Men always judge of the importance and imperativeness of any command or requisition, by the *consequences* which follow its neglect. When they are taught to believe that the penalties of disobedience will not take effect, or may be averted upon easy terms, disastrous results will ensue. Where they detect weakness and indecision in the administration of the law, they will soon learn to despise the law. This is true in civil government, and it would prove so in the case of the Divine government.

We assert, then, that the system which declares that "without the shedding of blood" there may be "remission of sin," is not likely to lead man to feel the exceeding guilt and the imminent peril of his condition as a sinner. So far as his iniquity causes him present discomfort, interferes with his present well-being, or occasions confusion and mischief in society, he may apprehend and feel its evil. But, as an offense against God, as exposing him to the terrors of a violated law, he perceives neither its malignity nor his personal danger. He cannot understand why one should cry out of the depths of a broken spirit, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" He does not feel that "there is no soundness in his

flesh," that he was "conceived in sin," and that "all the imaginations of his heart are only evil, and that continually!" To him, all this has the air of exaggeration; it awakens no corresponding consciousness in his heart: he acknowledges indeed that he is a sinner, that he has broken the law of God, that he has neither loved nor served his Maker, but all this gives him little anxiety. God is merciful and easily propitiated, and will be loth to cast off the creature he has made.

This, my hearers, is the precise operation of that system from which Christ is excluded. And so the sinner, having no just convictions of the evil of sin, of his own guilt and peril, hears the threatenings of the law and the pleadings of the gospel with the same indifference; and every effort to lead him to the Saviour, as a poor, helpless and ruined transgressor, comes to naught.

But what is gained, in this respect, by setting forth the doctrine of the text—that God, by the sacrifice of his Son, condemned sin in the flesh?

I. *God's opinion of sin* is illustrated in that sacrifice. That indeed might be inferred from his own holiness—from the temporal evils which he has made to follow in the train of sin; but if, without any such exhibition as was made on Calvary, he had opened his arms to the sinner, and received him back to his favor, it might have been doubted whether, after all, he regarded sin with that infinite abhorrence which he is said to feel towards all forms and degrees of iniquity. It might at least have been thought that the attribute of justice is subordinate to that of mercy. But the sacrifice of his Son has put all such questions for ever to rest. This was the costliest offering that could have been laid at the feet of justice. It was the highest possible exhibition of God's hatred of sin, and of the inflexibility of his law. It was the most striking demonstration of his ineffable holiness of which it is possible to conceive.

If then a man doubts his own guiltiness, or is disposed to look lightly upon the fact of his sin, I would take him to the cross, and show him the terrific consequences of sin, as exhibited there. Amid the cries, and curses, and jeerings of an infuriated rabble, hanging between two thieves, while rocks are rending and graves opening, and the noonday sun withdraws his light, I would point him to the Son of God, before whom angels had for ages rejoiced to cast their crowns, now bathed in blood, and in agonies unutterable, bearing the curse of a violated law. And while that mighty sacrifice proclaimed in his ears the astounding *love* of God, I would remind him how it also declares his opinion of the evil of sin—an evil so great, that, even in the exercise of his almighty sovereignty, he will not venture to offer pardon to a single transgressor, till, with tears and groans, his only Son has made expiation for human guilt.

And, my friends, it is the fact, that no man ever comprehended the true nature of sin, ever appreciated his own personal guilt,



until he had been brought near to the cross and stood by the side of Christ in his dying agonies. To that position he must come, before he can really feel his actual exposure to the wrath of a holy God, his need of forgiveness, and the deep malignancy of his own depravity. There the conviction will fasten upon his soul; If God spared not his own Son, what have I to hope for? If the innocent is thus made to suffer, upon the mere assumption of another's guilt, what vengeance must be in store for me, stained and blackened as I am with the defilement of actual corruption!

II. In the second place, what is the practical operation of the two systems under consideration, as it respects the *nature of the change* which we need to experience, in order to our salvation?

Where there is no just and adequate view of the evil of sin, there can be no proper understanding of the character and extent of the change which man needs to experience. And so we find it is thought by those who reject the doctrines of grace, that there is no such "weakness of the flesh" as to prevent us from fulfilling the law, so far as is necessary in order to our final safety. They assume a low standard of obedience, and a high standard of human ability. They are thus led to dispense with the agency of the Holy Spirit in effecting the sinner's conversion, and trust to their own might in producing this great change. They recognize the necessity of no radical transformation of their nature, of no renovation of the soul, and so they fail to take that initiatory step from which all true spiritual life must date its commencement. And this is like the endeavor to cause a perpetual stream to flow where there is no fountain, rain to descend where there are no clouds, foliage and fruit to grow where there is no root. They may become men of reputable morals, and unexceptionable outward demeanor, but they do not become the children of God and heirs of eternal life. They are not "born again," and therefore they "cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." This is conclusive against their system. They build upon their own good works; when, in fact, they do nothing which is really acceptable in the sight of God. Their faithfulness, in respect of their social and human relations, only serves to quiet their conscience in view of their neglect of weightier and more imperative obligations. There is no man so entirely unapproachable, as one who meets the solemn call of the gospel by pointing to his charities and honorable character, as though the law were thus fulfilled. How one who knows any thing of his own heart can be content to build upon such a foundation, we find it hard to conceive; but it cannot be doubted that there are multitudes who feel that the threatenings of the Scripture are not meant for them, and a Saviour is not needed by them, simply because their fellow-men can bring no charge against their reputation.

But there is a system of truth which leads to far different conclusions. It begins with revealing to man his true charac-

ter and his real condition. It calls off his attention from his own outward virtues—which are perhaps only the instincts of humanity, or prudential deeds which bring their own reward with them—and directs his eye upon the heart, upon its volitions and affections, as compared with the demands of God's pure and holy law. It takes up his motives and desires, and subjects them all to a rigid analysis; proves them in the alembic of the gospel, and shows the man that they are but dross. It applies a test, before which all his fancied righteousness vanishes like smoke. It thus empties him of all his pride, all his confidence, all his self-reliance, and makes him feel that there is *no soundness* in him. It next shows him precisely what he needs, which is a "new heart and a new spirit;" the implanting of a renewed nature, the infusion of a new principle of being; so that his choice, his preference will be directly reversed. It does not tell him that by reforming his habits, by beginning to obey God, he may gradually return to true holiness; but that all this must be the *result* of a changed heart, a spiritual regeneration. The issues are corrupt, because the fountain is corrupt; and a clean thing cannot be brought forth from an unclean.

It then satisfies him that this inward change it is beyond his power to accomplish, and thoroughly convinces him of his own inability. He is made to recognize his utter helplessness, while he still acknowledges the justice of his condemnation. He is chained, but it is his own fault, for he voluntarily placed his hands in the manacles of Satan.

But at this point the Holy Spirit leads him to Jesus, and in him he discerns One mighty to save. He throws himself at the feet of Christ, saying, "Lord, I am blind, open mine eyes; I am corrupt, make me clean; I am lost, give me redemption!" He hears the gracious answer: "I will—be thou clean!" and he is made whole from that very hour. The Saviour lifts him from the ground, seals him in the forehead with the sign of redemption, and he goes on his way rejoicing. Now he can say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And having *thus* entered upon his Christian course, having "entered by the *door* into the sheep-fold," he advances from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from knowledge to knowledge, till death closes his probation; and then, seeing Christ as he is, he is transformed into his glorious image.

This is the operation of the two systems which have been presented to your notice, in respect of that change which reason and Scripture declare must be wrought in the sinner before he can be restored to the favor of God.

The one merely whitens the sepulchre; the other purifies it of its uncleanness. The one only modifies the character, and checks its grosser developments; the other transforms it.

Is it of little importance which is received and adopted?

III. In the third and last place, how do the two systems bear upon the *promotion of practical godliness*?

The answer to this question has been already in great part anticipated. If there exist a radical mistake as to what constitutes true godliness, or as to the principle from which that godliness must spring, its baleful effect must be seen in the whole style and manner of life. But we would present this point in still another light.

What are the *motives* by which the man who hopes to merit heaven by his own good works is prompted to obedience?

They are low in rank, and weak in influence.

It is upon the principle of a *barter*, by which he hopes, at the price of so much obedience, to entitle himself to the reward of heaven. This motive is prudential and selfish; and how does it operate? It is opposed by other motives, promising a more immediate reward, and offering gratifications far more in accordance with the natural taste than the felicity of heaven; and so it is often overpowered and forced to yield. And the man, finding that the law of God is generally conquered by the law of sin, falls back upon the conviction that a very imperfect obedience will meet the necessity of the case, and God in his mercy will be ready to pass by his errors and defects; and so he drinks his fill of worldly pleasure, indulges his vain imaginations as far as prudence and public opinion allow; once in the week takes his seat in the house of God, occasionally gives a small fraction of his superfluous wealth to aid the Church in her heavenly mission; when he has leisure reads a chapter or two in the Scriptures, and trusts that all will come right at the last. It may be that he has an easy and quiet end, and when he is gone men speak well of him, and the monumental marble is placed over his dust, publishing to the world his princely virtues and his unsullied reputation. But what is the account which he has gone to render in to God? Of what self-denials in the cause of Christ, of what inward victories over corruption, of what struggles of faith with sense, has he to tell? Did the Spirit ever witness to him that he was born of God? Had he ever a living faith in Jesus the Saviour?

But how is it with one who has received the spirit of adoption; who has received Christ into his heart by faith, and "lived, and moved, and had his being" in Him? *The love of God*, the highest of all motives, becomes the principle of his life. He does his duty, not because he hopes thereby to entitle himself to God's favor, but because "the love of God constrains him" to do it. He *prefers* holiness to sin, and is led on to obedience by the ruling preference of his mind. He does not ask, "What is the *least* that is required of me as a Christian?" but, "How can I do *most* for Him who gave his life for me?" He is never satisfied with any existing attainments, but is constantly reaching forward after a higher conformity to the image of God; and when he has done

all, he says in sorrow, "I am an unprofitable servant." His loftiest obedience falls so far short of what he sees to be the divine standard of excellence, as to make him feel that after all he must trust only in the merit and the righteousness of God his Saviour for acceptance and salvation.

Such is the fruit of that system, of which Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, when it is rightly understood and truly received. The doctrine may be abused, and men may say, as they did in the days of St. Paul, "I will continue in sin, for grace abounds;" but never by one who knows any thing experimentally of the system of grace. The grand principle of that system is, *death to sin* in all its degrees and forms; and "how can they who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And the dominion of sin is never radically destroyed through any other agencies than those which proceed from the cross of Christ. Satan can be dispossessed of his sovereignty only by Him who went down into the grave to meet him, and there wrenched the bloody sceptre from his hand.

Arise, then, O sinner, and possess thy rest. Come to the Saviour, and you shall find peace to your soul. What the law cannot do, what your own efforts cannot accomplish, he will do for you. Whatever may be the darkness of your mind, he will give you light; however grievously and deeply you may have fallen, he will lift you up. Come to the Saviour, with

"All your sins against your God,  
All your sins against his laws,  
All your sins against his blood,  
All your sins against his cause—  
Sins as boundless as the sea!—  
And hide them in Gethsemane!"

## SERMON DLVI.

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THE COMPARATIVE BLESSEDNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S  
OLD AGE.

"Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not."—PSALM 71: 18.

AN obvious remark in entering upon the discussion of our subject is, that *the aged disciple is happy in the contemplation of his life's history.*

We are so constituted, that every evil deed is, in a measure, the instrument of its own punishment, and every act performed in obedience to conscience and to God the occasion of its own reward. Commit a deed of wrong, and he has ordained that, as an evil seed, it shall take root in the soil of your being, and unless grace interpose to prevent the result, shall henceforth blight and curse your existence by the bitterness of its fruit. Perform an act which God approves, and, by his decree, it shall be a seed whence shall spring a tree of happiness of immortal growth. This Heaven-ordained connection between evil done and evil ever afterward suffered by the doer—between good performed and good ever afterward enjoyed by him who has performed it—is secured through the medium of memory, in combination with the conscience. Though sin is often anticipated with pleasure, it is never remembered but with self-reproach. Though duty is often looked forward to with trembling, it is never looked back upon as performed but with emotions of gladness. The memory of a life spent in wickedness is a garner of evil, ever pouring out its hoard of bitterness on the soul, and yet ever full; while that of a life devoted to the service of God is a treasure of bliss, as abundant as the wants of the soul, and as enduring as its immortality.

The aged Christian, if this be true, cannot but be happy in the contemplation of *his past conduct and influence.*

His happiness is not, indeed, unmixed and perfect. Though his history has been marked and moulded by a deep and uniform desire for conformity to the Saviour's image, he remembers that sin has lurked in his heart, and, through his heart, found its way into the life. He recognizes, as he casts his eye back over the path of his Christian pilgrimage, many a point at which his feet strayed from the straight and narrow way—many a point at which duty neglected, or evil indulged, attested the imperfection



of his love. This he laments with sorrow sincere and deep: for this he implores the forgiveness of a gracious and covenant-keeping God.

But while there is here and there a page of sorrow in his history, it is contemplated, *as a whole*, with gladness. It contains the record of long years of allegiance and service, rendered in the spirit of obedience and love to his ever-loved and glorious Master. It contains the record of many an earnest conflict with temptation, and of many a victory won, through grace, over its utmost power. It contains the record of many a purpose which had its origin in a love that embraced both God and man; of many a scheme of usefulness, the adaptation of whose every part to its end tells of a heavenly guidance, and proves the bestowal of a heavenly blessing. It contains the record of his activity in scattering the good seed of the kingdom, and of rich fruits of righteousness already gathered as the result, and to be gathered in growing abundance for ever. It contains the record of many a plant of grace nurtured by his hand, and destined, through his instrumentality, to an everlasting bloom in the paradise above. Happy the man who, from amid the feebleness of declining years, may look back over the pathway of such a history, and recognize it as his own! What a volume of blessedness is expressed, when from the lips of such an one is heard the inspired and inspiring language of an early disciple: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith!"

How different this from the words of self-reproach which often force themselves from the lips of one who, having grown old in sin, has become distinctly and painfully conscious that his earthly course is well nigh run! He has lived for the pursuit of selfish and worldly ends, and no matter how successful he may have been in their attainment, now that he stands on the brink of the grave, bearing the marks of age in every feature, and trembling in every limb with its weakness, his soul is haunted by the consciousness that, so far as all the higher and better purposes of his being are concerned, his life has been thrown away. Thus a burden of wretchedness is rolled upon his heart, under whose crushing weight he sinks to the tomb. Thus a cloud of woe draws its curtains around his trembling, shrinking spirit, amid whose darkness and gloom the flickering lamp of his life goes out. In view of the emotions of the aged disciple, as compared with those of the aged rejecter of Christ, one may well exclaim: "Let me die the death of the righteous" not only, but let me live his life, that I may enjoy his old age!"

2. He is happy in the contemplation of *the blessings which have marked his history.*

The kindness of his heavenly Father has not only strewn his

path with rich gifts of grace and providence, but so constituted him, that every present blessing sends forward its light and joy to the end of his being. If a peculiar bliss is mine to-day, it is mine not to-day alone, but so long as the memory of to-day shall endure.

The thoughts of the Christian in his old age are often sent back over the pathway of his life, and made to mark the points at which Heaven's gifts were most abundant and rich. Thus he ever and anon rejoices anew in the temporal mercies with which God has crowned his being. Thus he lives over again many a period bright with the joy and glory attendant upon the richest displays of redeeming grace. Thus he experiences afresh the blessedness of many a season passed in the retirement of the closet, when God has communed with him from the mercy-seat, and, in answer to prayer, revealed himself to his soul in all the purity of his character, and in all the majesty and glory of his attributes. Thus he rejoices anew in the triumph of many an hour when, through faith, he has gained the victory over every doubt and fear, and joyfully rested in Christ as his Saviour. In view of these and kindred blessings experienced in the past, and joyfully remembered now, he is constrained to declare, that for him "to live is Christ," though he still feels that "to die is gain."

The memory of former joys never gladdens thus the heart of the aged transgressor. He has indeed received blessings at the hand of God with his every breath, but inasmuch as his reception of mercy's gifts has been accompanied by no tribute of grateful affection to their Author, he knows that in the judgment they will add to the weight of his condemnation. The remembrance of those gifts is made bitter by the accompanying thought that in the coming future they will prove to have been transformed by his own fault to curses. How striking, when contrasted with the experience of the aged sinner, appears the blessedness of the Christian, as from amid the infirmities of his old age he looks back upon the blessings included in his experience of the past!

3. He is happy in the contemplation of his life's history, *because of the lessons it has served to teach*. Life is a school, and experience a teacher. The Christian whose presence in this school has been continued during a long course of years, cannot but be indebted to its teacher for rich stores of truth and wisdom. He has learned a thousand times, and by a thousand proofs that there is a love in heaven which insures that to every Christian "all things shall work together for good." The record of his own inner life attests on many a page the tenderness of his heavenly Father's regard for the children of his grace, and affirms the blessedness of that history of which Christ is the model, the source and the centre. His observation of the movements of the Spirit and Providence of God gives abundant assurance that he is moving steadily and irresistibly onward toward the blessed-

ness and triumph of that predicted day, in which the Saviour's banner of righteousness shall wave over the earth in token of perfect and universal victory! These and kindred truths, impressed upon him alike through the medium of his own history and by the Word of God, he rejoices in as pledges of the realization of his brightest hopes with reference to his Saviour, himself and the world.

The same truths, or at least very many of them, the experience and observation of the aged sinner may have served to impress upon his heart; but such is his position in relation to them and in relation to God, that instead of being to him a source of happiness, they furnish fresh occasion for trembling in view of his condition and prospects. The blessedness of the aged disciple in the contemplation of his life's history, as contrasted with the aged sinner's wretchedness in the contemplation of his, may well prompt the prayer, "When I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not."

4. My next remark is, that *the aged disciple is happy in the continued possession of his life's chief good.*

Not so is it with the man whom the gray hairs and the tottering steps of age find still in his sins. He has outlived even the meagre enjoyments embraced in the experience of the worldling. Has he devoted his life-long energies to the pursuits of avarice? However great may have been the satisfaction he has experienced in the accumulation and investment of earthly treasure, that satisfaction has now become a thing of the past. The glittering splendors that are wont to adorn the home of wealth may, indeed, be scattered in profusion around him, but beyond the supply of his few daily wants, his riches contribute naught to his enjoyment. Increasing infirmities serve hourly to remind him, that his hold on the good to whose attainment he has given the cares and labors of a lifetime, is constantly slackening, and that soon that good will have passed for ever from his grasp.

Has he been content to give himself up to the pursuit of the degraded and degrading pleasures of the sensualist? The period for the enjoyment of these has, with him, gone by for ever. His every sense is dulled and palsied by age. His every sensual experience, it may be, has become an experience of weakness and pain.

Has he found satisfaction amid the stir and excitement of business? His business days are numbered now. His step has become too uncertain and feeble to admit of a longer familiarity with the farm, the manufactory, or the counting-room. However irksome may be the hours unemployed, save in communion with his own thoughts, there is for him no escape from them, except through the portals of the tomb. Through the portals of the tomb, did I say? There is *no* escape.

Has his chief joy been experienced in the society of the fashion-

able and the gay? The frivolities of fashion have no longer any charm for him. His moments of gayety, and with them the gay associates and friends of his earlier days, have long since ceased to belong to the present. He has been doomed to see the companions of his youth and early manhood one by one fall by the hand of death, until at last he stands as it were the sole representative of a past generation. As he looks on every side in vain for a single fountain of happiness still open to him, he must feel the appropriateness and force of the language of Solomon, as applied to the forms of good which he has chosen and pursued in life: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

The aged disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus has not thus survived his life's chief good. That which was years ago chosen as the chief portion of his soul is still the light and joy of his being. Though his hold on earthly pleasures was long ago relinquished, those connected with the smiles of a Saviour's countenance and the experience of a Saviour's love are his in the fullest measure. Of whatever else he may be deprived, these he is assured shall be as enduring as "the eternal years of God." Rejoicing in the experience of such exalted pleasures, even amid the infirmities of age his cup of happiness must be full. There is no burden which a present Redeemer does not enable him cheerfully to bear; no sorrow which faith in him does not render light; and no cloud which the light of his countenance does not dispel. Who, then, would not desire the old age of the Christian?

*I remark, finally, the aged disciple is happy in the near prospect of realizing his life's brightest hopes.*

In this respect also his experience is very different from that of the aged transgressor. He who has pursued the pathway of sin until he stands with the white locks, wrinkled features, and bowed form of an old man on the brink of the grave, has survived the death of all his hopes. If there be any such thing as a true personification of wretchedness on earth, we have it in him. Every fountain of happiness from which he has been wont to drink in his past life, is dried up; and he goes to a future which holds out to him not one promise of good. There is known on earth no such utter poverty and want, as that whose pinching hand has seized his condemned and sin-seared soul. The aged sinner, with all the hopes of his life buried in the past, goes down to the tomb enveloped in a cloud of darkness whose gloomy folds shall never be lifted.

Turn your thoughts now to the aged follower of the Lamb. The present, instead of being the darkest and saddest period in his history, is the brightest and happiest! The hopes with which, at a moment far back in the past, he began his Christian life; the hopes for which, at every step in that life, he has rendered to God the tribute of his grateful praise; the hopes which have

afforded light in so many dark hours, and whence has been derived strength in the midst of so many spiritual conflicts; these ever precious, ever glorious hopes are now about to be realized. The good to which he has been looking forward during his entire Christian race is almost reached—the prize almost won. His work as a Christian soldier has been long prosecuted; and now that he is about to lay down his armor, now that the good fight of faith is well nigh fought, he rejoices in the prospect of speedily wearing the crown of victory. He has long pursued his journey on earth, a stranger and a pilgrim here, seeking a better country; and now that his destination is almost reached, now that the shores of the heavenly Canaan are almost in sight, now that the glory of the New Jerusalem almost gleams on his vision, he rejoices in the prospect of soon entering into the rest of his eternal home. He is weary with his long journeying, but happy in the thought that the next tottering step may introduce him to a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Verily the old age of the Christian, marked by infirmity and weakness though it be, is a bright and happy period in his history. "When I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not!"

Aged disciples of Jesus! you have reason for the profoundest gratitude that yours is the old age of the Christian. As you think of what you are, and what you enjoy, in comparison with what you would have been, and what you would have suffered, but for the grace that directed your steps in former years into the path of life, you may well adopt the words of the Psalmist as the language of your hearts: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Much of worldly comfort that once was yours has passed beyond your reach; but there are still open to you rich and abundant sources of blessedness. From a past, through which the grace and mercy of God have led you; a past, whose days have been spent in the enjoyment of his love, and in self-consecration to his service; a past, bright with the displays and experiences of his grace, and rich in lessons of wisdom and truth, there come joys such as the heart of the aged transgressor may never feel. The present, notwithstanding the evident failing of life's vital energies, and the consequent loss of capacity for your wonted earthly pleasures, is rendered happy by an inward and spiritual light reflected from a Saviour's smiling countenance. The good which has been the choice and pursuit of your life-time, is with you now in increased and increasing measures. The future, how glorious! and its glory, how near! Pilgrims, weary and worn, ye are almost home! A few more of those tottering steps, a few more of those exhausted breathings, and your feet shall have passed the threshold of that heavenly mansion which a Saviour's love has prepared.

Aged disciples! soon you will all be gone, your term of ser-



vice ended, your crown awarded. In your places will soon stand those upon whom the frosts of age are now only beginning to fall, and afterward those who are yet amid the years of their fullest vigor and strength. Let these not think of life's later years as a burden, nor shrink at the thought of their approach. Let them rather look forward to the period when they shall be "old and gray-headed"—if they shall be permitted to behold it—as one which grace is adequate to make the most cheerful and happy of their lives. Let the desire to rejoice in the highest blessedness of the Christian's old age be among the motives that shall induce the highest devotion during the years by which it is preceded!

A word to such of the young and middle-aged as are numbered with the unconverted, will conclude this discourse. Few of your number, in comparison with the whole, will ever know what it is to be bowed down under the burden of years. This your observation of the ravages of death compels you to admit; and yet each of you doubtless indulges the hope, if not the expectation, that *he* shall be spared to old age. If this hope is to be realized in the case of any, they are one day to know the self-reproaches, the joylessness and hopelessness of the aged transgressor, or rejoice in the blessedness of the aged disciple. Which? Spend your life in sin, and your old age shall be all a burden and a curse. Consecrate the freshness of youth (if it be still yours) and the strength of manhood to God, and your declining years shall constitute a rich inheritance of joy, and be a fitting prelude to the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore.